

I took a vacation day from work to come to Lansing today to support HB 4163.
I'd like to share a little history.

More than a decade ago the Genesee County Board of Health enacted a regulation that banned smoking in public places. The regulation had several exemptions including bars and restaurants, but it was an important first step in providing a healthier environment in our community. As member of our local tobacco reduction coalition I was ecstatic that our county was among the leaders on this important health issue. My joy was short lived.

Big tobacco hit back fast and furiously. Within weeks a rider was quietly tacked on to a State bill pre-empting local municipalities from banning smoking in bars and restaurants. While disappointing, this action was no surprise. It is well known that the tobacco cartel has not had many victories in battles waged in small communities. The effort is much like putting out grass fires. Another one is always popping up. And we local yokels often give more credence to local partners than to well funded "front men" or "hired suits" from outside our community.

Pre-emption created a breach by taking power away from local municipalities to enact regulations while the smoke-free bar and restaurant issue went unaddressed on the state level

The time is ripe for Michigan to join its smoke free sister states. The scientific evidence regarding the health effects of second hand smoke allows conscientious lawmakers and public health advocates to wage battle with Big Tobacco supporters on what has traditionally been their home court.

The legislature has the fiduciary responsibility to promote the health, safety and welfare of the people of Michigan. It is a crucial power held by government to police.

Black's Law dictionary defines Police Power as follows:

"The inherent and plenary power of a sovereign to make all laws necessary and proper to preserve the public security, order, health, morality, and justice. It is a fundamental power essential to government, and it cannot be surrendered by the legislature or irrevocably transferred away from government."

I beg you to take your fiduciary responsibility seriously and pass HB 4163. Do it for my student, Karen who is putting herself through college by working as a waitress and is forced to inhale second hand smoke as a condition of her employment. Do it for my son Paul, a musician who dreads performing in Michigan because of the smoke filled venues. Do it for your constituents, but most importantly, do it because it's the right thing to do.

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